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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM,

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2034
TAGS: PGOV PREL CH HK
SUBJECT: CONSUL GENERAL'S FAREWELL CALL ON MFA ACTING
COMMISSIONER ZHAN YONGXIN

REF: HONG KONG 1371

Classified By: Consul General Joe Donovan for reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) Summary: In his July 23 farewell call with the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Hong Kong office, the
Consul General regretted the Central Government Liaison
Office's (CGLO) unwillingness to engage the Consulate
General. MFA Acting Commissioner Zhan Yongxin assured the CG
the United States was not being singled out in this regard,
and that other consulates have raised the same issue. Zhan
undertook to look into this matter, but explained that while
CGLO handled relations with the Hong Kong government, it left
relations with the Consulates to MFA. Both sides praised the
state of US-China relations and noted the importance of Hong
Kong as a bridge between China and the United States. The
Consul General renewed to Zhan the importance the U.S.
attaches to the success of "one country, two systems." End
summary.

Central Government Liaison Office Refusals a Major Regret
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¶2. (C) In a cordial farewell call July 23, the Consul General
thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Commissioner's
Office for their cooperation and friendship over the past
year the CG had been in Hong Kong. At the same time, the CG
expressed regret that officials from the Central Government
Liaison Office (CGLO) in Hong Kong refused to meet with him
during that time, and asked Zhan why the CGLO was reluctant
to engage the Consulate General. Zhan noted the CGLO was not
singling out the CG or the United States as the CGLO does not
interact with any of the foreign consulates in Hong Kong.
Zhan noted this point has been raised by other consulates.
CGLO sees its primary responsibility as managing relations
between the central government and the Hong Kong government
while the MFA Commissioner's Office is tasked to maintain
relations with foreign counterparts. (Note: Reftel reports
Hong Kong Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
as stating that CGLO conducts outreach to the Hong Kong
people in which the Hong Kong government plays no role. End
note.) However, Zhan promised the CG he would look into this
matter.

¶3. (C) Acknowledging this formal division of labor, the CG
suggested it might have been useful, for example, for CGLO to
have discussed its recent trips to the United States with the
Consulate. (Note: CGLO visited the Federal Election
Commission this month and also sent a delegation to observe
the U.S. Presidential election last fall. End note.) Zhan
reiterated that he would convey the CG's points to CGLO.

Hong Kong an Important Bridge
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¶4. (C) Zhan stressed the important role Hong Kong plays as a

bridge for friendship between China and the United States. Although Hong Kong has been prosperous and stable in the twelve years since returning to China, Zhan asserted that Hong Kong will need to be more active in international fora if it wants to maintain its standing as an international financial center. Part of the MFA's mission is to help and support Hong Kong's participation in international bodies, pointing to Hong Kong's attendance at over 60 key international meetings since 1997.

¶5. (C) The CG told Zhan he has emphasized in his public statements the importance U.S. attaches to Hong Kong's continued success under "one country, two systems", including meeting the Hong Kong government's timeline for constitutional reform. The CG also applauded the MFA for helping Hong Kong successfully host the 2008 Olympic equestrian events and participate in China's G20 delegation. The CG was confident China benefited greatly from the advice of Hong Kong financial experts such as Hong Kong's long-time Monetary Authority head Joseph Yam.
DONOVAN